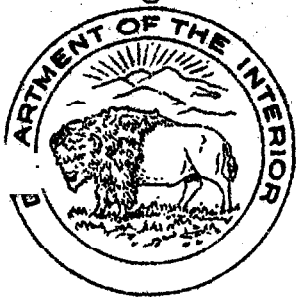


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only***DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****INFORMATION SERVICE****OFFICE OF COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES**

For Advance Release TUESDAY, PMs, MARCH 20, 1945

The Pacific halibut fleet of several hundred vessels will not begin its fishing operations this year until May 1, two weeks later than the usual date for the opening of the season, according to Charles E. Jackson, Assistant Deputy Coordinator of Fisheries.

The halibut fishery -- the only deep-sea fishery under international regulation -- is controlled jointly by the United States and Canada through the International Fisheries Commission, of which Mr. Jackson is a member.

The vessels and crews which will enter the halibut fishery on May 1 are now fishing for sharks, lingcod, and other bottom fish off the coast of Washington and Oregon, Mr. Jackson said.

The later opening date was requested by halibut fishermen and was approved by the Commission on the grounds that larger fish are available later in the season.

This year, American and Canadian fishermen will be allowed to take 52,500,000 pounds of halibut -- an increase of a million and a half pounds over last year. The condition of the halibut stocks, which a few years ago were in a state of extreme depletion, is now showing definite improvement and the Commission has been able to increase the quota gradually.

Although the total catch of halibut is not large, this choice species is marketed widely throughout the country, the bulk of the catch being shipped from Pacific coast ports to the northeastern states. Halibut livers are an important source of vitamin oils.

The halibut is a giant flounder. While the male grows to a weight of more than 40 pounds, females have been found weighing ten times as much. The halibut is a slow-growing species, reaching commercial size at 5 years, maturing at 12, under favorable conditions living for perhaps half a century. Because of its slow growth, it is especially subject to depletion. Minimum size limits now protect young halibut, however.

The halibut is one of the chief species still caught by hook and line rather than in nets or traps. Like all flounders, it is a bottom feeder and lives close to the ocean floor where it is taken on lines ranging from 300 to a little more than a thousand feet in length. The species probably can live at even greater depths, but it is not at present economical to fish for them in such deep waters.

(over)

The Pacific halibut, like its cousin in the Atlantic, is found in places where the warm waters from the south mix with Arctic currents. In the Pacific its habitat is a rough crescent from Bering sea and the Alaska peninsula and continuing south to northern California. It is also found in waters near Russia and Japan.

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